

Recent rarities are scarce but searches go on

By Roger Boye

This week's column answers more questions about coins and currency.

Q—My son has started collecting coins by checking the dates on our pocket change. Should he be looking for any big rarities from recent years that still might be making the rounds in circulation?—S.G., Clinton, Ia.

A—The 1972 "doubled die cent" in mint condition garners bids of \$200 and up at hobby auctions, making it the rarest "circulating coin" of the last decade. Workers at the Philadelphia Mint produced nearly 3 billion cents in 1972, several thousand of which had doubled letters and numbers on the heads side.

With such a low mintage, your son has almost no chance of finding a "doubled die" in circulation, but collectors still have fun searching. [Cents dated 1972 without doubling have no special value.]

Incidentally, four great rarities exist among recent proof coinage [money made for sale to collectors, not for circulation]. In 1968, 1970 and 1975, the government—in error—produced a few proof dimes without the "S" mint mark, and in 1971 made a few proof nickels without the "S." Dealers sell each of those proof coins for \$1,000 or more.

Q—I've collected coins for several years and am wondering why the government places dates on coins. Maybe people wouldn't hoard coins without dates.—L.K., Gurnee.

A—Dates help investigators trace the source of poorly made or counterfeit pieces. Also, many governments use dates to mark an important event or achievement, record the tenure-in-office of rulers depicted on the coins, or simply log the passage of time.